

A N. 161
NARRATIVE
OF ALL THE
Proceedings in the Drayning of the
GREAT LEVEL of the

FENNS.

Extending into the Counties of

North^{on}. Lincoln, Norffolk, Suffolk,
Cambridge, and Huntington, and the
ISLE of ELR;

From the time of *QUEEN ELIZABETH*,
untill this present *MAY*, 1661.

For the Information of all concerned.

BY *N. N.*

L O N D O N,

Printed by *A. W.* for the use of the Author, 1661.

NARRATIVE

OF THE

Proceedings in the District of the

OF THE

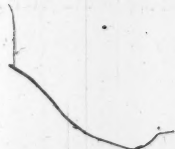
FELLS



THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

Smithsonian Institution

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A Narrative of all the proceedings in the Drayning of the Great Level, &c.

IN the 43. year of Queen *Eliz.* 43 *Eliz.* an Act was made to encourage any that would undertake the Drayning of the said great Level, which was attempted in several parts; by *Carril* for the Drayning of *Thorney*; by *Cocking* and others for *Londoners Fenns*; which were both gained, and lost again.

In the third year of King *James*, the whole was 3 *Jac.* attempted to be Drayned by Sir *John Popham* K^t. Chief Justice, Sir *Thomas Fleming* Chief Baron, Sir *William Rumney* Knight, and Alderman of *London*, and *John Eldred* Citizen of *London*, who were to have had for their recompence, 130000. acres, who did proceed, but could not effect that work.

In the 16th. year of King *James*, Sir *William Syloff* 15 *Jac.* K^t. and *Anthony Thomas* Esq; became undertakers to

drain the said Level, and were to have had two thirds of some, and half of other grounds for their recompence; but this *Drayning* was without success.

Cam-
bridge
Law,
Feb. 20.
19 Jac.

Afterwards King *James* himself by a Law of Sewers was declared Undertaker for the *Drayning* the whole, and was to have had for his recompence, 120000. acres; But this attempt likewise failed.

Sept. 6
Car. 1.

In the 6th. year of King *Charles* the first, (of blessed memory) The Commissioners of Sewers for the said great Level, and parts adjacent, did agree with ~~one~~ Sir *Cornelius Vermuyden* to undertake the *Drayning* the said Level, who was to have had for his recompence, 95000. acres, but nothing was done, in respect of his being an Alien.

Jan. 6
Car. 1.

After in the said 6th. year of King *Charles*, the then Commissioners of Sewers for the said Great Level, and parts adjacent, did make it their request to *Francis* then Earl of *Bedford* to undertake the said work, who was to have for his recompence, 95000. acres, whereof the said King was to have 12000. acres for his Royal assent to that Law, and concurrence to an Act of Parliament.

Feb. 7
Car.

In pursuance whereof the said Earl undertook this great and hazardous work, and for his assistance therein, and by an Indenture consisting of 14. parts, Dated 27. Feb. 7 Car. 1^o. he took in diverse Adventurers, and Participants with him, who adventured for these several shares following;

Viz. The said *Francis* Earl of *Bedford* for three whole shares, or lots of 4000. acres to each lot.

Olivier Earl of *Bullingbrook* for one lot of 4000.

Edward

Edward Lord Gorges for one.

Sir Robert Heath K^t. for one.

Sir Miles Sandys Knight and Baronet for two.

Sir William Russel Knight and Baronet for two.

Sir Robert Bevell Knight for one.

Sir Tho. Terringham K^t. for two.

Sir Philbert Wernatt for one.

William Sams Doctor at Law for one.

Anthony Hamond Esq; for two.

Samuel Spalding Gent. for one.

Andrew Burwell Gent. for one.

Sir Robert Lovet Knight, for one.

In all twenty lots, each of 4000. acres divided between the said 14. parties.

In, and by which said Indenture, amongst other things, it is agreed, as followeth.

That if any one of the aforesaid parties, or their Assigns, after notice, should fail in the payment of such moneys, as from time to time should be imposed on them, in pursuance of the said Indenture for the carrying on the said work, that then it should be lawfull to, and for the rest of the said parties, or their Assigns, to supply the same, or to admit some other person, or persons, to have the share of such defaulture, paying the sum imposed on the said share, and that all such parties as aforesaid, by himself, or his Assigns so failing, shall be wholly excluded, and for ever debarred from demanding, or receiving, all, or any such sum, or sums of money, as any such person, or persons had formerly disbursed, for, and towards the said work.

After the executing of the said 14th. part Indenture

ture, divers of those Participants did assign and convey unto other persons several proportions of their shares, and Adventures by them undertaken by the said Indenture.

By virtue of this Agreement, the said Adventurers, and their Assigns proceeded so far in this hazardous adventure, that after the expence of 100000^l. therein, it was adjudged drayned at *Peter-*

12 *Car. borough.*

13 *Car.* And in *Octob.* in the 13th. year of the said King *Charles*, by a Law of Sewers made at *S^c. Ives*, the said 95000. acres was set out by descriptions and boundaries therein mentioned, where, and how this 95000. acres should be taken out of each Parish, or Landowners land in the whole *Level*, according to which setting forth, the whole 95000. acres was thus divided and allotted.

First, 12000. acres therof for the said late *K. Charles*.

And 80000. acres thereof was divided into twenty lots, each containing 4000. acres, which was divided amongst the aforesaid parties to the 14th. part Deed, and their Assigns, as aforesaid.

And 3000. acres did remain to be disposed of at the pleasure of the Adventurers.

In pursuance of this Law, a great part of the said 95000. acres was divided from the Countrey, and some of the said Adventurers had possession of some parts of their said proportions, but had no conveyances, nor received but little rent.

14 *Car.* For that by a Law of Sewers made at *Huntingdon* in the 14th. year of the said King *Charles*, upon complaint

plaint that the said Level was not perfectly drayned, The said King *Charles* (of happy memory) was declared undertaker to drain the same (*inter alia*) and was to have for his recompence, not only the said 95000. acres set out unto the said Earl, but also 57000. acres more out of the same Lands and Parishes within the said Level, and the said Earl and his Participants were to have had 40000. acres of the said 95000. acres freed from Taxes for their charges expended, which would have been of more advantage to them, than the whole 95000. acres on the terms they have it. After which Law the Inhabitants of the Country did re-enter upon the said 80000. acres, and 3000. acres, part of the said 95000. acres, and the said King continued the possession of the said 12000 acres; but about the year 1641. his said Majesty gave over his ^{1641.} undertaking, and soon after the whole Level became drowned again, and then the Country entred upon the said 12000. acres also, and kept the whole in their own possession.

In this Condition the said Level returned to be, as bad drowned as ever before, with the loss of 100000^l. to the said Earl, and his Participants; afterwards a Parliament being called in the year 1640. the said Earl and his Participants, or their Assigns, did petition the said Parliament, that they would impower the said Earl to go on, and perfect the aforesaid work; and in 1641. their case was committed. But the said Earl dying about the said year, and the late unhappy wars being then begun, there was for some time a stop to the prosecution of the said Act, till about the year

1646. when *William* now Earl of *Bedford*, son and heir of the said *Francis*; the Honourable *John Russell*, and *Edward Russell*, brothers to the said *William* Earl of *Bedford*; *Sir Myles Sandys*, *Sir John Marsham*, *Anthony Hamond*, *Robert Henley*, Esquires, and others, in number and interest, for the greatest part concerned in the said 83000 acres, did address themselves to the Parliament then sitting, that they might be impowred by an Act to prosecute the said work of *Drayning*, for the recovery of that vast and lost Country, which after several hearings of all parties before a Committee, the Act was ready to be presented to the house of Lords, but the late unhappy differences prevented for that time its further progress.

Afterwards about the year 1648. the said *William* Earl of *Bedford*, by the assistance of *Sir Myles Sandys*, *Robert Henley* Esquires, and divers others of his said Participants, did prosecute the obtaining of an Act of that pretended Parliament, in order to the *drayning* of the aforesaid *Level*. And after several hearings of all parties, both of the Country, and Adventurers, before the Committee, an Act passed in the said pretended Parliament in *May* 1649. By colour of which pretended Act, the said Earl and his Participants did meet together in prosecution of the aforesaid 14. part Indenture: And accordingly the Earl of *Arrundel*, (under whom *Sir William Playter* claims) *Collonel John Russell*, and *Edward Russell* Esquires (brothers to the said Earl of *Bedford*) *Sir Myles Sandys*, (under whom *Collonel Samuel Sandys* claims) *Sir John Hewitt*, *Sir William Terringham*, *William Dodson*, *Sir John Marsham*,

Marshall, Anthony Hamond, and Robert Henley Esquires, and divers others interested in the said work of Drayning, who had 7 parts of 8 in the said 83000 acres, finding themselves out of possession, did in *June* following, resolve to raise moneys for carrying on the said work in prosecution of the aforesaid 14th part Intenture, being enabled thereto (as the times then were) by the said pretended Act. But several persons failing in the due payment of their moneys, as aforesaid; the said Earl, with the residue of his said Participants were necessitated about *November* following, either to admit some other persons in the room of those who failed to supply the payment of such moneys as was raised according to the said Agreement, or otherwise to lose the whole, to wit:

By which means moneys being raised, the said work was carryed on till *Lady Day* 1653. and then the whole Level being adjudged drayned, possession of the said 95000 acres was given to them accordingly, and by virtue of an Act made in the Parliament begun the 25th. of *April*, 1660. it still continues.

Several Banks which together are above 200 miles in length, 70 miles whereof are generally 9 foot high, and 60 foot wide at feat or bottom, the rest generally 5 foot high, and 24 foot wide at feat; Besides, they have cut one Navigable River 21 miles long, an 100 foot broad, besides divers Sewers and drains together above 400 miles in length, some 40 foot, some 30, some 20, none under 12 foot wide; besides, they have made divers great and Navigable Sasses and Sluces, and Bridges, for the doing whereof,

